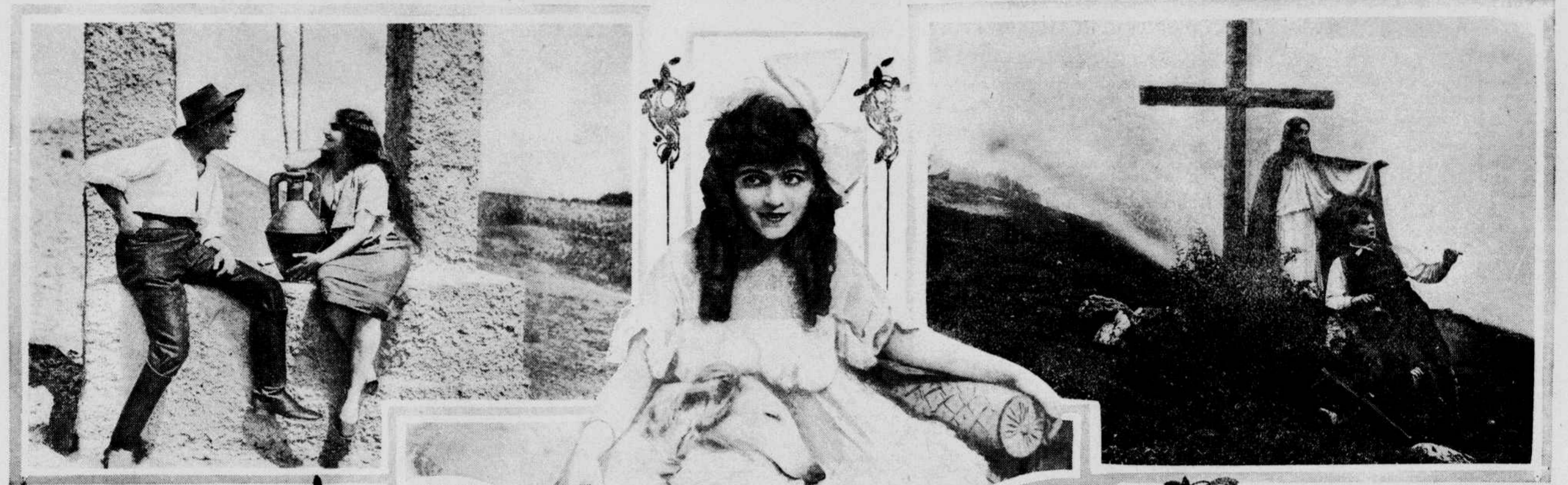


# CHEAPNESS OF GERMAN MOVIES ONLY STRONG CARD

First comprehensive assortment of German made film pictures to be published in America. Panel at left shows Ellen Richter as the *Sicilian Vampire*; panel at right, a scene from the cinema based on the famous Oberammergau Passion Play. In the centre is Germany's Mary Pickford, Ria Jende. In the large oval is Pola Negri and Stahl-Nachbaur, the most successful stars; in small oval a pleasanter view of Pola Negri.



## More Than 200 Teutonic Plays Already Here, Chief Merit in Producers' Eyes Being Their Small Cost

GERMAN motion pictures have been streaming over here lately in something like the mass formation with which the Teutons tried to break the Allies' line. It is estimated that there are something like 200 Teutonic films now in this country, either accepted already by some of the leading American companies or else going around in circles until they bump into a purchaser.

Some of the cinema illuminati over here profess to see no danger in this invasion, and assert that it can do no harm to the American market to get an infusion of German films, even if, technically, we are still at war and making faces at each other. These optimists generally belong to companies that have taken one or more German pictures, and naturally they don't feel they've hurt themselves.

On the other side are the pessimists, generally the directors and the actors, who brood darkly over the conviction that the American market is nursing a viper and ask whether something can't be done about it—especially by the other fellow.

The directors are particularly outspoken because in the present depressed state of the American industry the large companies find it cheaper to buy German made films, which are usually sold for a song, rather than produce their own. If this practice continues some directors fear in their hearts they will have to go back to being stage carpenters or training dogs for circuses.

### Peddled at a Few Thousands, Only a Small Part of Cost Here

The big independent directors, like D. W. Griffith and John Emerson, consider they are scarcely in a position to dread the competition of the common run of Teutonic pictures, but are "agin 'em on general principles," having heard that the Germans are limiting the number of American films to be unrolled before the spectacled Prussian audiences, while all but forcing their own products on their dear friends and late enemies, the Yankees.

As an indication of the low prices at which the German films are being peddled here, a picture of the Grade B, non-Pasteurized type can be picked up for about \$5,000, or less than the average film magnate here spends per year on cigars—according to his press agent. The low grade German picture, the kind that looks as if a group of persons got together and said, "Let's have a movie," and then proceeded to have it over with, can be

bought for as low as \$2,000—and it's a poor celluloid financier who can't scrape that much together, even if he has to borrow it from his camera man.

"Passion," the German picture which broke the ice in America, cost about \$40,000 to produce and was sold to First National, who stimulated the public into thrusting more than that amount on them the first week it was exposed here. Some of the \$5,000 pictures, done with much characteristic elaboration of detail, have scenes holding thousands of extras, and it would cost the average American director that much money to produce one of these scenes alone, not to mention the wear and tear on his nerves from trying to keep the crowds of supers together, which often necessitates a trip to the mountains to recuperate.

But now that they have made their first inroad here, and believe that they have the market seeking them with their initial spectacular successes, the Germans are beginning to jump their prices, which indicates that they are almost human after all.

To the average native layman the pictures themselves are something just as new and interesting as though they had been fired here from Mars out of a gun. That is because, as the veriest outsider knows, American films during the war, when Continental studio activities were suspended, had a chance to make giant strides forward and conquer the world not only commercially but artistically, so that even one of the old guard of speaking stars, clutching a lucrative contract just handed to him by a film company, had to admit there was something in them.

Therefore the public here is on the watch to note if the Germans have caught up with us to the extent of gaining the same sense

## Harding's Reaction to His Gigantic Task

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canism is often sneered at as "provincial," "parochial." I don't know that there is anything disgraceful about being provincial or parochial. Very nice people live in the provinces and parishes of this country; very well informed and intelligent and highly moral people. Of this sort is the President, and his brand of Americanism is the brand of middle class Indiana, Ohio, the Middle West, if one can restrict it to any section, which one cannot possibly do, for it is found in all sections. It is the lifeblood of all sections. The President's kind of Americanism is the kind that will appeal, I venture, to most of us who aren't too highbrowed to feel it. It's old stuff, much too out of date for the intellectuals that preach a kind of dead level of internationalism, and some of them pine for the day when even the races shall merge—white, black, yellow, brown—into some unimaginably hued hybrid. His kind is the Battle of Lexington—Bunker Hill—Stars and Stripes—I Am An American Citizen—America First kind. It's still to be found in Gurey's Fourth Reader. It isn't bunk with Harding. He feels it, thrills to it. Tears come into his eyes about it on occasion. The flag snapping in a breeze tightens something inside him.

Here's a prediction: Harding will keep the peace to the utmost limit of decent patience and actual honor. He believes the

In panel above is Otto Gebuhr, one of Germany's most versatile film actors. In circle is Emil Jannings, equally popular.

of story development, and of using cut-backs, fade-ins, close-ups and all the other dodges by which American directors make the audiences feel they are getting a bowing if not a speaking acquaintance with the characters.

### Lacking Some Features, Yet Show Much Grasp of Screen Artistry

Though "Passion" showed few close-ups and similar devices, this and the other imported pictures have revealed an artistic grasp of the new medium and an evidence of a cultural background on the part of the director—all too rare in this country—which manages to project itself from the screen in spite of subtitles that too often read like soap advertisements.

Snapshots are shown for the first time herewith of scenes from some of the pictures which are now loose in this country and will probably soon be measured for the screens of some of our leading cinema palaces.

First and foremost, of course, comes Pola Negri, looked upon as the best bet Germany has in the cinema line, though she is coming to this country shortly, because, while the German screen industry is developing, the salaries of the stars are hardly large enough to keep pace with their restored appetites. Her antecedents have been blared about so consistently since she made her first imprint in "Passion" that they hardly need recapitulating, but for the sake of those who are not here to the arena of filmdom, he said that she is of Polish birth, that she danced in the Imperial ballet at Warsaw before the Czar, and that she went to Germany to matriculate in the films.

Since the war she has made eighteen films and shows no signs of wearing out. One of these is "Martyrium," in which she has the pleasant duty of strangling Stahl-Nachbaur, and will continue to do so until the film censor gets after her. This picture, produced by Union-Film, is looked upon as a most lavish and compelling story of society life, for the Germans, like ourselves, have discovered there is a call for society life on the screen, even without its Kaisers and its Junkers treading on every one's toes.

Pola Negri is one of the few striking and successful brunettes of the films, for movie audiences seem to prefer blondes, perhaps because their hair doesn't seem so much like a blot on the horizon.

Second only to Fraulein Negri is Emil Jannings, the leading German male star, with a fine skill in characterization that would make him at home anywhere provided he didn't have to say anything. According to some reports he is an American who went abroad to study under Max Reinhardt, and he is so good that America might as well claim him, since the Germans claim Shakespeare. There is a natural sense of humor shown in his puckered lips and constantly revealed in his acting—a feeling for the comic that is often absent in American leading men, else many of them would suppress the blubs sent out by their publicity department.

Jannings's specialty is kings, though he can play a tramp with equal facility, possibly because nowadays the dividing line between the two classes isn't so clearly drawn. It is reported that he will be featured more strongly than ever by Adolph Zukor, head of the Famous Players-Lasky Film Corporation, along with Fraulein Negri, and his remarkable director, Ernst Lubitsch, who is known as the D. W. Griffith of Germany and who looks like Al Jolson trying to think up a new Winter Garden joke.

By the way, Reinhardt has been working quietly in the movies for some time and threatens to make a bid for Lubitsch's laurels, for the prints received here indicate that his screen version of his own stage spectacle, "Sumurun," is like a Cook's tour of the Orient with a little real action thrown in.

"The Christ of Oberammergau" is a photoplay version of the celebrated Passion Play, containing a story within a story and handling masses of persons with the ease of subway guards. The German devotion to detail is revealed in the stills of this picture received here, for there is even a halo around the head of the Christus.

"Whitechapel," a Gloria film, as might be expected, is an English subject, though the scenes in a restaurant, for instance, hardly seem to smack of London, while the waiters wear side whiskers so long they must be a bother during the soup course. Typically Germanic, also, is the countenance of the leading man, Otto Gebuhr, who dabbles considerably in society—on the screen—and who bears the cognomen in this picture of *Baronet Harry*, though such a title would be looked upon as an absurdity in London, even in the film halls.

## Here Are the First Stills From Recent Importations Yet to Be Shown and a Story of the Leading Stars

mans appear to be inclined to steep themselves, now that they can't convince any one they won the war. However, they deserve considerable credit for trying to introduce something artistically new in the films in "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," and in "Uriel Acosta," one of their films modelled after classical painters, they have endeavored to compress Rembrandt into the movies.

### Films Deal With Bolshevism And Take Liberties With History

Some of the subjects, like "Unchained Humanity" and "The Defender of the Oppressed," deal with Bolshevism, naturally enough, since they are still wondering if they're cured of it. Others profess to be very frank about history, like "The Night of Queen Isabella," in which the part of the Queen is played by Fern Andra, an American girl who went to Germany to discover she was a histrionic celebrity. She came from Milwaukee, where she evidently trained for her future career with the Germans there on the stuff that used to make Milwaukee famous. After playing here with Essanay, she went to Germany and was caught in the crush when war was declared. She decided to remain there and make the best of it, which led her to fame on the screen.

Not so pretty is Asta Nielsen, though she is preeminent as a tragic actress, and in "Hamlet" gives that story a new twist by disclosing him in the end to be a woman—a fact which will explain to many unchivalrous men why the Prince can't make up his mind. Henny Porten is another of their prominent actresses, having already appeared here in "Deception," though she takes life too seriously for most American audiences.

No matter how healthily blonde and corn fed the German stars may appear to be, they always have a touch of the spiritual in their countenances which saves them from the look of sophisticated chorus girls which many American actresses bear. Such is handsome Lotte Neumann, who appears in "Moj," while the May girls, Emma and Mia—the latter appearing in a striking story, "The Guilt of Lavinia Morland"—have looks and to spare. Charming Hella Moja, playing in the very artistically adorned "Marriage of Figaro," might easily have her features copyrighted in America.

Germany at this late date has developed its own John Bunny, Victor Plagge, known familiarly as "Karlehen," a rotund man with an expansive face similar to the late comedian's that has the elasticity of gutta serena. They have their matinee idols like Harry Liedtke and Ernst Hoffmann, and their sinister men of the world, like Conrad Veidt. And no mention of German film stars would be complete without the name of Paul Wegener, soon to appear here in "Der Golem," playing bizarre characters that Dante might have made to order.

## Filming 100 Tons of Molten Steel

A MOST remarkable moving picture was recently taken by the United States Bureau of Mines. In reproducing the various processes in the manufacture of iron and steel sheets at the plant of a large American company it was desired to show not only each mechanical step but the actual making as well as the handling of the molten steel or iron. When pig iron and scrap steel are subjected to a high temperature in an open hearth furnace, using producer gas or oil as a fuel, the iron and metals gradually melt until an immense liquid bath, like a small lake or pond, is formed, which boils like water at a temperature of over 2,800 degrees Fahrenheit. The actual melting and boiling of the metal is interesting as seen through blue glasses, but a close up view is not possible because of the heat.

The promoters of the moving pictures referred to conceived the idea that the value of the picture would be decidedly enhanced if it were possible to take a moving picture of the actual melting and boiling of the steel. In this case they had to deal with an open hearth furnace holding 100 tons or 200,000 pounds of metal melting down to finally boiling. The result of their efforts was the production of a picture of this

process, which had never been accomplished before.

A regular moving picture camera was so fitted up that it was waterjacketed—that is, encased in a water cooled fireproof box. This was placed just inside the furnace. The operator of the camera wore an asbestos suit and stood just outside or almost in the door of the seething furnace. The attempt was eminently successful, and a picture has resulted which is a revelation to behold. Not only is the hard metal, the pig iron and the steel, seen, gradually melting, together with the formation of the slag which floats on top, but the actual boiling of this 100 tons of molten steel is seen in all its phases. It is a beautiful sight and an instructive one. The metal boils like water on a stove, the bubbles growing gradually larger and larger.

While no actual scientific phenomena not already known were revealed by this achievement it is conjectured that with the use of the speed camera, involving the slowing down of operations and with probable improvements in the camera itself, new facts of vital value to industry may some time result from the application of the moving picture to metallurgical operations. From an educational point of view the making of such pictures is of almost inestimable value.